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Fiction Really Fact

Many a mystery writer has enjoyed the humor of having his hero write detective stories as an avocation.

And a few mystery writers — Erle Stanley Gardner, for example — have turned to crime detection and solution as an avocation.

In the closely related writing field of the spy thriller the same sort of thing has happened. A number of writers of tales of international intrigue actually have had backgrounds in intelligence or espionage. Ian Flemming, author of the James Bond series, is only the best known at the moment.

Nonetheless, it came as a surprise when we discovered that this writer of lurid, sexy, improbable adventures is the author of the foreword to "Room 3603," a new and officially sanctioned non-fiction book on the British intelligence service.

But it came as a greater surprise to find that not only "Room 3603" and two other weighty non-fiction works on the same subject are recommended reading

for U.S. Naval Intelligence officers, but that a work of fiction also is on the list.

Writing in the magazine, "U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings," Commander Robert Bublitz of the Foreign Intelligence Division, Office of Naval Intelligence, recommends "Room 3603" and:

"The Craft of Intelligence," by Allen Dulles, recently retired head of CIA.

"A Short Course in the Secret War," written anonymously by a recently retired U.S. government cloak and dagger official,

And the novel "The Spy Who Came in From the Cold" by John Le Carre.

Apparently Mr. Carre, a far superior writer than Ian Flemming, knows whereof he speaks, but finds that thinly disguised truth makes the finest fiction.